

**REMARKS**

It is respectfully submitted that neither of the prior art references cited by the Examiner (i.e., U.S. Patent No. 4,738,380 and European Patent Document No. 0149164) meet the proposed new claim limitation. In the '380 patent, the ceramic mortar 49 has a direct exposure to the interior of pour tube 42. In the '164 patent, the ceiling compound 11 is directly exposed to the interior of the pour tube. By not having direct contact between the material in interface zone 13 and the molten metal, as it passes through the pouring tube element 10, the material in interface zone 13 does not become deformed prematurely.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**DRAFT**

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